



Susan Bysiewicz
SECRETARY OF THE STATE
CONNECTICUT

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For more information:
Av Harris (860) 509-6255
Cell: (860) 463-5939

- STATEMENT -

BYSIEWICZ PRAISES U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE PASSAGE OF BILL REPEALING V.A. BAN ON VOTER REGISTRATION

SECRETARY OF THE STATE ALSO WELCOMES STATEMENT FROM
CONNECTICUT GOVERNOR M. JODI RELL IN SUPPORT OF ALLOWING NON-
PARTISAN REGISTRATION DRIVES AT VETERANS' HOSPITALS NATIONWIDE

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz today issued the following statement following passage by the House Committee on Administration of the "Veterans Veteran Voting Support Act," sponsored by Congressman Chris Murphy (CT-5). The bill would require the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs to allow non-partisan voter registration drives for patients and residents of VA hospitals, nursing homes and homeless shelters nationwide.

"The House Committee's action sends a powerful message to the VA: Let our veterans vote! I commend the leadership of Congressman Murphy on this issue and I strongly urge passage as soon as possible by the full House of Representatives.

Time is of the essence; we have less than 100 days until the most important national election in a generation. We want our veterans registered to vote so they can make their voices heard. The VA's current policy bans voter registration drives and VA officials will not permit me, as Connecticut's chief election official, to educate our injured veterans about how to use our new voting machines. This is an illegal restriction on our veterans' right to vote that could disenfranchise up to 100,000 VA patients nationwide. This policy is a slap in the face to our most patriotic Americans who have sacrificed so much to preserve our most fundamental right to vote.

I have always said this is not about partisan politics. More than 20 of my colleagues across the country, both Republican and Democratic Secretaries of State have joined me in demanding that the VA reverse its flawed policy. And I welcome the statement made

by our Governor Jodi Rell to Paul Bass of the New Haven Independent supporting non-partisan voter registration drives at VA facilities. As Governor Rell said: if it's non-partisan voter outreach, what is the problem?

The VA is charged with caring for our wounded warriors. Why on earth would they want to restrict our veterans' right to vote? What is the VA afraid of? So far, the VA has not given one good answer to this question. The ban on voter registration defies common sense and it ought to be repealed."